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Implementation of a New
School Supervision System
in Poland

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IMPLEMENTATION OF A NEW SCHOOL SUPERVISION SYSTEM IN POLAND

Education Working Paper No. 111

by Grzegorz Mazurkiewicz, Bartłomiej Walczak and Marcin Jewdokimow, Jagiellonian University

This working paper has been authorised by Andreas Schleicher, Director of the Directorate for Education and Skills, OECD.

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ABSTRACT

This case study explores the strategies, processes and outcomes of an education reform in Poland which was introduced in 2009 and substantively changed the school inspection system. Its analysis looks in particular at the co-operation between the central and the local level throughout the implementation of the programme. In order to address the shortcomings of the prior inspection system, the reform combined internal and external evaluation in school supervision practice and put greater emphasis on collaboration among stakeholders. The results of the analysis show that the reform has had a great impact on the organisation of inspectorates, introducing modern principles such as teamwork and self-evaluation. Also, it affected the attitudes of important actors in the education system regarding the relevance of data to support internal and external school evaluation. The overall goals and aims of the reform gained the support of the various stakeholders. However, the implementation and communication processes were seen as deficient, especially in terms of a lack of capacity to roll out the reform as well as a lack of trust/disbelief that evaluation can be used for improvement, rather than the expected punitive purposes. Nevertheless, the reform achieved first structural steps towards building a culture of self-evaluation, which had thus far not been part of the Polish education system.

RÉSUMÉ

L'étude de cas présentée ici examine l'amélioration des performances du système scolaire polonais au moyen d'un nouveau mécanisme d'évaluation introduit en 2009. Ce dernier s'appuie sur des structures conçues pour se substituer au dispositif d'inspection existant, ce qui rend la mise en œuvre de la réforme difficile à plusieurs égards : aspects logistiques et structurels, changements d'allégeance et problèmes d'orgueil professionnel, ainsi que luttes de pouvoir entre les niveaux central/régional/local. Tandis que la majorité des enseignants et des directeurs touchés par la réforme soutenaient les objectifs généraux du programme, des doutes s'élevaient quant à la procédure de mise en œuvre elle-même. Dans de telles configurations, un échange structuré entre les acteurs clés faciliterait l'alignement des stratégies de mise en œuvre avec les objectifs globaux de la réforme. La critique principale fustigeait un manque de capacités (moyens financiers ou connaissances) au niveau local pour la mise en œuvre de la réforme, et un certain scepticisme quant à la possibilité d'utiliser l'évaluation pour susciter des améliorations sans recourir aux sanctions habituellement prévues. Néanmoins, la réforme a effectué les premières démarches vers le développement d'une culture de l'auto-évaluation, jusqu'à présent absente du système éducatif polonais.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Complexity in education systems is on the rise due to a number of intersecting trends. Parents in OECD countries have become more diverse, individualistic and highly educated. As evidence about school and student achievement has become more readily available, stakeholders have also become more demanding, pushing schools to cater for the individual needs of their children.

One of the most important responses to this increasing complexity has been decentralisation: allowing local authorities, school boards and schools a greater degree of freedom to respond to diverse and local demands. Education systems are now characterised by multi-level governance where the links between multiple actors operating at different levels are to a certain extent fluid and open to negotiation. At the same time, ministries of education remain responsible for ensuring high quality, efficient, equitable and innovative education. Therefore, one of the crucial questions for OECD countries is how their increasingly complex education systems can achieve national objectives.

Existing research on governance and educational systems shows that there is an abundance of conceptual material on governance but limited work connecting this to education, particularly empirical work. This case study was prepared as part of the Governing Complex Education Systems (GCES) project in the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) of the OECD¹. The case study looks at the governance of education within multilevel systems through an in-depth analysis of the design and implementation of specific education policy reforms. In particular, it investigates the strategies underlying a reform aimed at changing the school inspection system in Poland. The case study explores how the central and local levels co-operate in a system with strong school autonomy and local level decision-making. It also identifies challenges for the implementation of the programme.

The reform was introduced in 2009 and changed the way in which pedagogical supervision, in particular school inspection, is conducted in Poland. The reform was an attempt to keep up with modern societal demands on education and became necessary because the prior inspection system had major shortcomings, including inefficient processes, unclear roles and tasks for inspectors, and the lack of a coherent policy approach for school inspections.

The main aim of the reform was to combine internal and external evaluation in school supervision practice. The intervention built upon a standardised approach to external evaluation and reflected the need for quality assurance in a decentralised educational system that is characterised by far-reaching autonomy of schools and other educational institutions. The reform focused on three functions of supervision: (1) monitoring compliance with the law, (2) supporting the work of schools and other education institutions, as well as teachers in performing their activities and (3) undertaking evaluation of education institutions.

Furthermore, the reform put greater emphasis on collaboration among stakeholders, intending to establish a sustainable culture of cooperation to support the new processes. The changes introduced by the reform have deeply influenced a range of areas of the school system, such as the organisation of inspectorates as well as the attitudes of important actors in the education system regarding the relevance of data to support internal and external school evaluation. The reform also influenced students' social and school life as the new approach to evaluation includes more stakeholders than before and requires more collaboration across school communities.

¹www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/gces

Key findings

The analyses of this report is based on a substantive body of empirical data. Two sets of computer-based questionnaires were sent to a wide variety of education stakeholders in Poland. The first set was answered by 55 headmasters co-participating in the training of inspectors, evaluation inspectors, chief inspectors and representatives of the Ministry of National Education; the second set contained 3 132 questionnaires answered by headmasters and teachers after an external evaluation of their school. The study also analysed key legal documents of the reform as well as the public discourse in Poland around the issue of school inspection as represented by the public press.

The criticism of changes concerns not so much the overall goals and aims of the reform, but rather its implementation and communication.

Stakeholders understood the reform as a wide-ranging endeavour rather than a collection of smaller modifications to the inspectorate. Over 90% of teachers and headmasters who answered the question understood the reasons for evaluation, even if they had reservations about the methodology used in the school evaluation. At the same time, underlying concept of the reform to create a new institutional culture of collaboration within school communities as well as an ongoing reassessment of processes was not well recognised by interviewees. Also school autonomy as one of the key changes was rarely acknowledged.

The reduced understanding of the reform goals is illustrated by conflicts that arose during the implementation process. In some instances, governance levels appeared to pursue individual agendas and strong-armed other stakeholders instead of promoting the reform's ideas. If such local power games persist and prove systematic, this can strongly impede the overall success of the reform if not met by the central level with support and reassurance of the local level's autonomy (particularly the school community). Building a constructive culture that involves open dialogue and collaboration as part of school evaluations is something new to the Polish context, where traditionally inspection is seen as oppressive or even harmful.

While school headmasters and inspectors did not notice capacity problems when implementing the reform, chief inspectors identified a substantial lack of resources to meet the goals of the reform.

There is a significant difference of opinion between inspectors and school headmasters (who participated in training and implementation of the evaluation process) on the one hand and chief inspectors (who knew the reform priorities only from documents and information meetings, who were not involved in the process of designing the reform and did not profit from an in-depth training at that time) on the other.

Neither school headmasters nor inspectors indicated major problems with the resources needed for the implementation of the evaluation and they also considered the knowledge they possessed during training as an asset. Intriguingly, inspectors had doubts about the reform while the headmasters largely accepted the change.

The chief inspectors pointed out major problems including a lack of a corresponding increase in the budget of the inspectorates as necessitated by the reform and an absence of comprehensive information about the change during the reform's initial stage.

The reform resulted in substantive institutional changes to the managerial structures of schools and school headmasters agreed that the reform influenced the way their schools operate.

On the micromanagement level, the reform encouraged teamwork, democratisation and transparency, exemplified by the evaluation method and inclusion of different groups. During the implementation of a new system of pedagogical supervision, headmasters, inspectors and chief inspectors introduced several

internal changes. Usually those changes concerned the administrative or legal regulatory level (for example, the necessity to formally establish self-evaluation teams) and were sometimes focused on work organisation. This can be interpreted as a first, structural step towards building a culture of self-evaluation, which had thus far not been part of the Polish education system.

Thanks to the reinforcement of the role of self-evaluation, the reform forced the introduction of data-based decision-making procedures into the schools' daily reality. Simultaneously, the standards allowed the schools to place their activities within the wider context of the State's requirements.

Eighty three and a half per cent of headmasters and teachers in those schools that underwent an external evaluation and responded to the questionnaire observed the developmental nature of the evaluation – hoping that reflection over collected data would be helpful in improving the quality of schools.

Key recommendations from this case study

The reform needs some fine-tuning with a special focus on communication, the organisation of work and open discussion about the roles of education and evaluation. The following key recommendations can be made:

- Promote the aims of the reform to a broader audience:
 - Communicate reform goals in a clear way and give guidelines for their interpretation and implementation.
 - Promote reform not only to expert groups but to a broader audience to gain support for the envisaged cultural change.
- Extend the scope of the decision-making process leading to reform:
 - Facilitate the participation of all key actors, including chief inspectors (which often felt left out), in designing the reform in order to enhance ownership and acceptance.
- Foster the development of research tools needed for school evaluation:
 - Put emphasis on standardised tools to ensure comparability.
 - Build necessary capacity at the local level to apply research tools.
- Develop a new culture of evaluation:
 - Present a clear strategy for evaluation, outlining its purpose and methods.
 - Facilitate continuous discourse on the chosen strategy among key actors to be able to adjust the strategy where necessary.
 - Build trust at the local level and in schools for the use of evaluation results.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Polish educational system has undergone a period of intensive reform since the collapse of the Communist government in 1989. These reforms included areas such as decentralisation of school financing, liberalisation of curriculum and textbook design, changes in the organisation of educational career paths for students and the extension of compulsory education. All changes also included the transfer of substantive school governing responsibilities from the central to the local authorities resulting in a decentralised education system with its consequences for efficiency and quality control.

The following case study was prepared for the OECD-project on “Governing Complex Education Systems” (GCES)² and analyses the implementation of a new school supervision system in Poland that was introduced in 2009. The reform can be regarded as a nation-level answer to fundamental societal changes in Poland after the fall of the iron curtain, which resulted in increasing complexity of the education system and increasing needs and demands of main actors (teachers, parents, students, etc.). The reform also sought to establish and reach national objectives in a decentralised education system. The implementation process of the reform is still ongoing and constant reflection and modifications are central elements of this process. The case study at hand provides a thorough analysis of the early phases of the reform, from its conception to the first steps of implementation.

As set forth by the Framework for Case Studies of the GCES project, the research questions that were the basis for this report are as follows:

- What were the expected **results** of the policy reform? Are the expectations clearly stated in the design?
- Were the underlying concepts of the reform clearly stated and easy to understand? How many actors communicated at how many levels? Was the **communication** distorted along the way?
- What were the **perceptions** of different stakeholders with regard to the goals, process and the final setup of the policy programme, its implementation and its outcomes? Were local activities consistent with the intended design and organisation? Were there “undesired” outcomes, and if so, for whom?
- Did the results of the programme have an **impact** on central or local education policy?

Data and methodology

The case study scrutinises the governance of education within the Polish multilevel systems through an in-depth analysis of the design and implementation of the chosen reform.

²www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/gces

The study is based on a range of empirical data:

- 55 Computer-Assisted Web Interviews (CAWI) conducted for the purpose of this study. The questionnaires were answered by inspectors and school headmaster from across Poland participating in training to preparing them for the implementation of change, and also by chief inspectors and representatives of the Ministry of National Education.
- 3 132 CAWI questionnaires, answered by headmasters and teachers after an external evaluation. These voluntary questionnaires were conducted via the Internet on a regular basis after every external evaluation as an element of the new system.
- Laws and other legal documents (Educational System Act, The resolution of the Minister of National Education of 7 October 2009, project documentation, including procedures, analyses etc.).
- Relevant media articles: in the period from January 2011 to March 2012, 181 articles containing the phrase “pedagogical supervision” appeared in the Polish press. This includes the specialised press (Przegląd Oświatowy, Nowa Szkoła, Głos Nauczycielski, Dyrektor Szkoły, Gazeta Szkolna, Dyrektor Przedszkola, Wychowawca), the national press (dailies and weeklies without regional releases: Rzeczpospolita, Dziennik Gazeta Prawna, Gazeta Wyborcza, Przegląd, Fakt, Tygodnik Solidarność, Gość Niedzielny, Polityka) and regional press (Głos Szczeciński, Polska The Times – Dziennik Łódzki and supplements from: Łódź, Lublin, Bydgoszcz, and Toruń, Kurier Szczeciński, Gazeta Pomorska, Dziennik Wschodni, Dziennik Podhalański, Echo Dnia, Nowiny Gliwickie, Gazeta Lubuska). Out of a total of 93 articles containing this expression in the national and regional press, only 30 of them dealt with the issues of pedagogical supervision in relation to the reform analysed in this case study, including 28 articles devoted exclusively to this subject. Others raised the issue of pedagogical supervision in a context other than the reform (e.g. pedagogical supervision is mentioned when writing on the provisions of a given chief inspector, regarding local cases, or liquidation of schools). In the specialised press, 88 articles containing the term “pedagogical supervision” were published in that period, all of which pertained to the reform.

This mix of data sources allows for mapping the perspectives of various stakeholders towards the reform. By including the views of “insiders” as well as the general discourse, the study offers a comprehensive understanding of the reform’s impact.

Inevitably, the present study covers a particular time frame and consequently cannot be understood as a final assessment of the change precipitated by the reform. Nonetheless, the value of such an approach lies in understanding complexity as is the main objective of the study. Most notably it provides insights into the following:

- what elements operate within an system and what kinds of relationships tie them together (and what are the consequences of those relationships);
- the ability to use and understand diverse perspectives and lenses while implementing certain solutions or strategies;
- awareness of the complexity of the system as it difficult at times to notice all the important elements and understand the structure (Williams, Hummelbrunner, 2011).

The remainder of the case study is structured as follows: Chapter 2 looks into the aims and structure of the reform including the underlying motives as well as the context of the Polish education system. Chapter 3 analyses the roles of and connections between various key actors³ in the change process of the Polish pedagogical supervision. Chapter 4 then identifies the reform's successes and shortcomings with regard to implementation, resource management and impact. It also looks at the public discourse around the policy reform, mainly by analysing press coverage and public attitudes towards changes triggered by the reform. Moreover, it discusses the perception of inspectors and headmasters with regard to the reform's effectiveness. Chapter 5 offers the central conclusions and key recommendations drawn from this study.

³ The system and stakeholders interrelations are described in chapter 3.

CHAPTER 2: THE MODERNISATION OF THE POLISH PEDAGOGICAL SUPERVISION SYSTEM

The history of pedagogical supervision in Poland goes back to the times of the Commission of National Education in the 18th century (Grabski, 1984). The year 1989 was an important turning point for the Commission, as the powers of school chief inspectors changed significantly: they lost direct control over schools to local governments, particularly with respect to management. As a result, inspectorates supervised schools on behalf of the governing institutions responsible for schools (mainly the Ministry of National Education and local governments), while focusing on a variety of issues, like logistics of the winter or summer vacation or problems with teachers' discipline, that were not clearly described in any legal documents. All 16 inspectorates in the 16 regions (in Polish voivodeships) had the right to implement different approaches and methods and monitor different areas of school activity as they saw fit. This essentially led to a situation in which Poland had 16 local educational policies and supervision methodologies; a level of fragmentation that had never been intended when the system was initially developed during the 1990s.

Analyses of the pedagogical supervision practice before 2009 including the reports of the Supreme Chamber of Control (Supreme Chamber of Control, 2002, 2008) indicated several shortcomings of the then existing system. They included:

- an unclear division of powers;
- the ambiguous role of an inspector (combining the three tasks of inspectorates: school quality assessment, legal control and support and guidance for schools);
- being overly focused on controlling school compliance to the very letter of the law instead of improving the quality of education;
- the lack of an efficient school support system, e.g. for professional development. For example, due to asymmetric relations between schools and schools inspectors, the popularity of self-evaluation among teachers as a quality assurance mechanism declined.

In addition, the decentralisation of the education system into three levels – central (the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education), regional (school inspectorates) and local (local governments) – was judged not as a success but rather as detrimental to the system's effectiveness (Supreme Chamber of Control, 2002).

In order to address these challenges, the resolution of the Minister of National Education on 7 October 2009 changed the way in which pedagogical supervision was conducted in Poland. As a result of this reform, three functions of supervision were introduced:

1. Monitoring the compliance with the law.
2. Supporting the work of schools and other educational institutions and teachers in performing their activities.

3. Assigning educational evaluation of schools and institutions to different departments of Inspectorates and different inspectors.

The main goal of the case study at hand is to analyse the changes made to pedagogical supervision and its consequences for the third function, that is, evaluation.

The new system of school evaluation consists of two main elements: autonomous self-evaluation (conducted by teams of teachers) and external evaluation conducted by inspectors trained in evaluation. When carrying out the external evaluation, the inspectors are obliged to consider the school-specific environment (i.e. socio-economic context, share of students with special needs etc.) along with the results of its self-evaluation. The final evaluation “product” – a report written by the team of inspectors – is a mixture of voices and interests, analysed from the perspective of several standards imposed by the state (see Box 1 below).

Amongst the research tools there are such that ensure the participation of schools and local communities in the creation of the school’s evaluation report (e.g. focus group interviews with students, their parents and non-pedagogical staff). The final outcome of the evaluation-report is discussed with teachers and headmasters prior to its publication and the inspectors are obliged to address the teachers’ remarks.

Box 1. The educational standards addressed during external evaluation

An integral element of the law regulating the school supervision in Poland is a list of requirements (standards) that schools are obliged to fulfil. These include:

- Focusing on students’ learning.
- Analysing student achievements (based on standardised tests and internal grades).
- Supporting and developing students’ activity.
- Ensuring students’ safety at school.
- Understanding individual students’ situation.
- Supporting the effectiveness of teaching and ensuring teachers’ cooperation.
- Working on students’ attitudes.
- Co-operating with local actors and parents.

Although the reform of pedagogical supervision only concerns the education system, the standards also affect other areas such as students’ social development. The standards do not form an exhaustive list. Rather, they define priorities and strategic requirements inherent in long-term strategies which seek to address the challenges facing modern societies (Berdzik & Mazurkiewicz, 2009).

The basic goal of the evaluation process is to provide information useful to the development of schools and the education system as a whole. The evaluation system was designed to gather information about the work of the schools as determined by government set standards. For the first time in history of Polish education, the information gathered by the inspectors has been made commonly available to the public (through the internet).

Source : Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 7 października 2009 r. w sprawie nadzoru pedagogicznego (Minister of Education Regulation from 7th of October 2009 concerning pedagogical supervision), available online at <http://bip.men.gov.pl/images/stories/APsr/nadzor08.02.pdf> (in polish, consulted February 2014).

The evaluation system intends to promote a flexible reaction to the changing conditions of modern life and also of school operation, which is reflected in both the wording of the standards and in the construction of the research tools. The standards are subject to constant evaluation and discussion among all stakeholders, making way for modifications where necessary. The key element in determining the quality of evaluation is the participation of all school staff in the evaluation process at its different stages and levels (Mazurkiewicz & Berdzik, 2010). In the literature the reform is seen as a clear departure from the 19th century model of education and in particular as a change of “the traditional supervision, hierarchical relationship structure and anxiety” (Mazurkiewicz & Berdzik, 2009: 11). The reform also acknowledges that, as with the rest of society, the educational arena will continue to change, so the new pedagogical supervision model is designed to be flexible, e.g. through updates of the list of requirements (the last update was done in September 2013). The intention of the designers of the reform is that the updates will be carried out on a democratic and autonomous basis.

Accounting for Poland’s decentralised education system, the reform also grants a considerable degree of autonomy to regional and local levels: “The requirements have been set at a very general level, allowing the autonomy to determine the course of action and to conduct activity according to local needs and competences. Schools and institutions should work to meet these requirements, but in accordance with their capabilities and contexts” (Mazurkiewicz & Berdzik, 2009:10). The reform of the Polish pedagogical supervision reflects the key issue specific to modern educational systems, i.e. combining competing values such as quality, equality, effectiveness and autonomy (Chapman et al., 1996). The “school evaluation system should become a mechanism that enables schools to [...] develop an efficient organisational structure, and that supports the education system [...] in contributing to the development of our society” (Mazurkiewicz & Berdzik, 2009: 11).

Another characteristic feature of the reform is the knowledge approach that bases supervision on both external and internal evaluation. The first is performed “by properly qualified inspectors, whose results will serve both schools and pedagogical supervisors” (Mazurkiewicz & Berdzik, 2009: 11). The internal evaluation is carried out “by the staff of the school, according to its needs and for its use” (ibid.). The necessary knowledge base for evaluating individual schools is built up through both quantitative and qualitative methods and from different sources. Headmasters, teachers, actors of various authorities and experts play a key role in interpreting the information collected. It is the role of the inspectors, acting in teams, to combine all these views from different members of the school community. The results of the research conducted during the external evaluation should generally be reconciled with the outcomes from the self-evaluation. In order to facilitate this, the inspectors discuss the draft version of the report with the teachers with the aim to form a joint report. In case of disagreement the inspectors have the last word.

These reports are essentially intended to fulfil one of the main aims of the reform, namely to develop “institutions, in other words, enabling teams in schools and institutions (headmasters and teachers), to work effectively on the quality improvement of a school and institution by providing information on the quality” (Mazurkiewicz & Berdzik, 2009: 13). There is also a complimentary access to data collected during the process of the external evaluation through an Internet platform, which presents aggregate data from all answers to the questions asked in schools. This database is regularly updated. This is intended to facilitate the decision-making processes as well as the management and development of the education system itself.

Key features of the evaluation system

What are the key features of the new knowledge-based school evaluation system in Poland? According to the reform’s principles, it is intended that school evaluation is democratic in spirit: members of all groups of the school community participate in it. Another core requirement is that the procedures used are transparent, granting the public access to the criteria, tools and results of the evaluation. The reform also requires that an evaluation should be a conscious process that takes into account the diversity

of school communities and therefore engages all stakeholders in a dialogue on evaluation methods and processes (ibid.).

In general, the interviewed groups highlighted the multitude of analytical tools and methods used for the change assessment. Headmasters mentioned, among other things: questionnaires and interviews conducted with parents, students and teachers, self-assessment sheets and reports. Inspectors and headmasters use a different array of tools when analysing direct data from particular schools. Likewise, other tools are used in data analyses on national level which are conducted mainly by the Jagiellonian University in Krakow and the Centre for Education Development.

Inspectors described regular meetings with other inspectors on various issues: the content of reports, results of external tests and examinations, Educational Added Value indicators, cases of good practices implemented by headmasters and needs and expectations of school headmasters and of school authorities.

Overall, the reform introduces the principles of formative assessment (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) into the Polish education system: self-reflection and continuing reevaluation are core elements of this approach. From the school perspective, the evaluation should result in community democratization, encouraging dialogue between actors, showing multiple perspectives and undertaking evidence-based decisions. In this context, the reform therefore does not only address technical issues such as evaluation procedures but also questions of institutional cultures.

The reform was partially funded by the European Social Fund, and had funds of a total of 20 million Euros. Professional guidance during the implementation phase was provided through a partnership with the Jagiellonian University in Krakow.

CHAPTER 3: KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN THE REFORM OF THE POLISH SCHOOL INSPECTION SYSTEM

The Polish educational system was highly centralised before the collapse of the communist system in 1989. This reflected a centrally planned industry, as well as an authoritarian government aiming to control the curriculum. The reforms introduced after 1989 gradually reduced the dependency of schools on the central government. Today, local (district) governments have taken over the responsibility for financing and human resources management. The central government (Ministry of National Education) proposes a broadly defined curriculum, which is then developed by the schools. This is a semi-free market: Schools can select from a variety of textbooks that have been reviewed and approved by Ministry experts. The ministry creates educational law and educational policy and decides about ways of supervision and inspection carried out by regional administrative bodies (inspectorate, in Polish *kuratorium*).

The Polish school system consists of three compulsory levels: primary school (six years from the age of six to 12), secondary school (three years from the age of 13 to 15) and high school (three to four years from the age of 16 to 18) for both general and vocational education. Pre-primary education concerns children three years old and up. For children aged three and four years old, pre-primary education is voluntary and subject to parental decision, but all five year olds are obliged to complete a preparatory year in kindergartens or other pre-school institutions. In total there are about 55 000 education institutions under the supervision of the pedagogical inspection: more than 35 000 schools and about 20 000 other institutions, such as child care centres, kindergarten, teacher training centres, libraries and more. Almost all pupils attend public-sector schools (98 % in 2010). Most of the funds for education – 93.6% for primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (OECD, 2013) – come from the state budget.

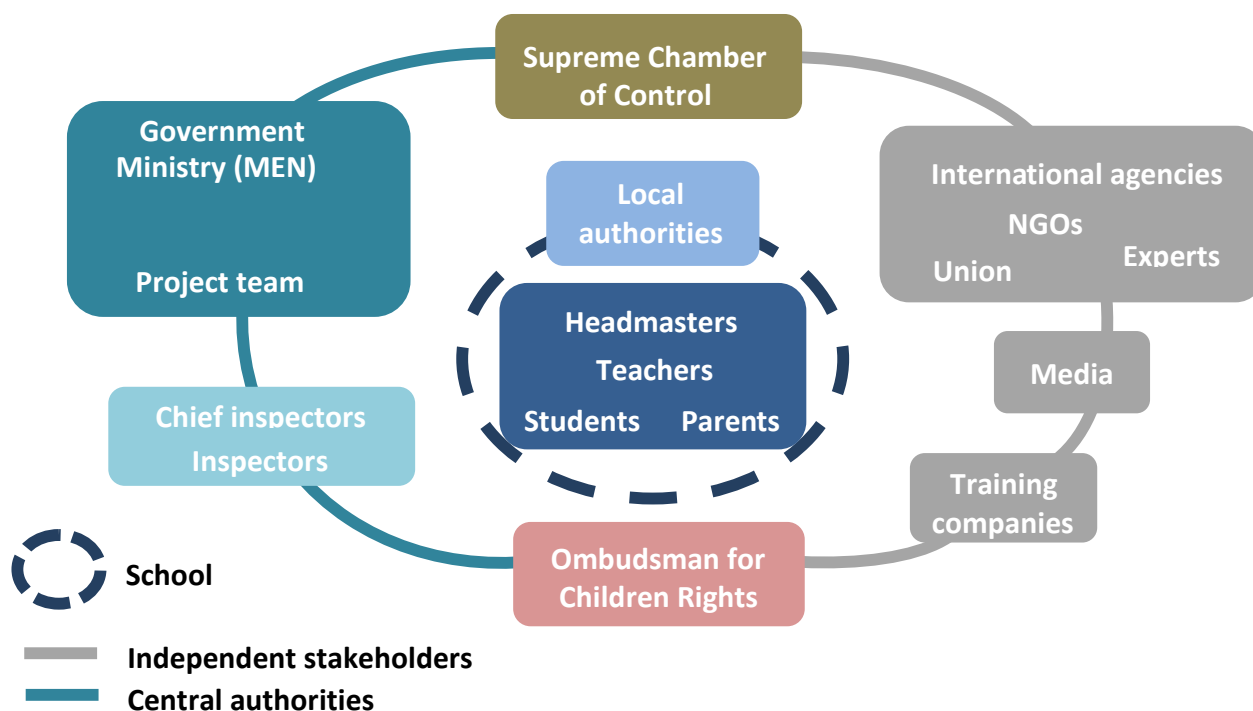
With this reform, a complex mosaic composed of various groups of stakeholders appeared. While their number and variety significantly increase the complexity and richness of the educational environment, they also make for much more unpredictable implementation process.⁴ Figure 1 provides a schematic of the dynamic and open environment the reform was operating in. The actors include:

1. political and administrative decision makers on the central level;
2. professionals (mainly teachers and school headmasters) working in the field;
3. experts working in various domains of the education system (design and development, evaluation, training, research);
4. the audience of the evaluation reports published by the inspectorate (e.g. local government officials, parents, the media and students);

⁴ The Ministry of Education at the central level oversees 16 school inspectorates at the regional level that encompass 2479 local authorities (i.e. municipalities). Some schools are managed by central institutions or district authorities, e.g. schools located in reformatories are managed by the Ministry of Justice.

5. school inspectors who conduct the evaluation and who, by their sheer number (more than a thousand in 2014), constitute an influential group with multiple possibilities for influencing this process (as they work with administrators, experts, authorities, school headmasters and teachers, and sometimes have chance to speak with parents).

Figure 1. Stakeholders in the Polish education system and the reform



Throughout the implementation phase, different groups of stakeholders and actors took the lead in triggering change. The primary impetus for change came from independent education experts, the Supreme Chamber of Control⁵ report (M2) and from recommendations of international organisations such as the OECD⁶. The Ministry of National Education⁷ together with the Education Development Centre⁸, an institution subordinated to the Ministry, were then responsible for the direct implementation of the reform. During the two-year preparatory period (2007-2009) of the reform, many stakeholders – especially teacher unions, headmasters associations and education management staff, NGOs and experts – were invited to provide feedback to the goals and envisaged processes. The Supreme Chamber of Control and the Ombudsman for Children are also strong voices in the education system, even if they are seldom involved in actual policy-making. This particularly pertains to the Supreme Chamber of Control, whose reports propagating the need for change were crucial for the reform. The process was also monitored on an ongoing basis by the media, serving as an additional “social” regulator. According to a representative of the

⁵ The Supreme Chamber of Control is the top independent public audit body in Poland.

⁶ For example *School Evaluation: Current Practices in OECD Countries and a Literature Review* EDU/WKP(2009)21 (EDU Working Paper No.42).

⁷ Polish *Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej*(MEN).

⁸ Polish *Ośrodek Rozwoju Edukacji* (ORE); Polish national teacher training institution based in Warsaw.

Ministry of National Education (M2⁹) as well as information drawn from project documentation, the key methods of disseminating information on the reform included:

- legal changes for conducting pedagogical supervision;
- meetings and conferences held at the ministerial level with chief inspectors;
- support of inspectors, teachers and headmasters through professional development and collaboration between schools and external experts;
- an information campaign to strengthen pedagogical supervision, including training, conferences, seminars and promotional materials;
- creating and updating the Internet domain npseo.pl, where 3,300 reports on external evaluation were published by summer 2012¹⁰.

The implementation of the project¹¹ itself relied on two partners – the Ministry and the Jagiellonian University with regard to the preparation of methodology and procedures, and training for the inspectors and headmasters. Inspectors were to undergo intensive training of 18 working days with regard to the reform. Finally, the inspectorates themselves were responsible for the direct implementation of the reform goals and related change management processes.

The intended beneficiaries of the reform are schools and other educational institutions, as well as further actors within the school environment: students, parents, teachers, education workers, management staff, operating units and local authorities. Headmasters are at the same time responsible for introducing self-evaluation in their schools and the activities of their educational institutions.

It is worth noting that the reform also affected unplanned beneficiaries, such as research and training companies offering support in the implementation of self-evaluations, or in teaching how to pass through the external evaluation.

⁹ Letter M indicates respondents from the Ministry of National Education, information from interviews conducted for this case study.

¹⁰ By March 2014 there were 12 900 reports.

¹¹ The project was divided into three phases: Preparation (2007-2009), Implementation (2009-2011) and Stabilisation (2011-2015). The Stabilisation phase included an additional third partner – Evaluation Era (an independent business that provided teacher and principal training).

CHAPTER 4: POLICY REFORM: INTRODUCING CHANGES IN PEDAGOGICAL SUPERVISION

One of the three main elements of the “new” system of pedagogical supervision was an evaluation system for schools and other educational institutions (such as kindergartens, pedagogical libraries, training centres and others). The main aim was the creation of a database that would be used for development and improvement of institutions and the whole educational system in Poland. On the micro level, stakeholders had to face a great number of challenges. Inspectors had to reorganise their work outside of the office and in schools; they were required to travel more frequently and to get acquainted with the use of information and communication technology in order to meet the requirements of the reform. Similarly schools needed to come to terms that they now had to involve students and parents, invite external community partners for dialogue and enable discourse on evaluation.

To understand the dynamic of the change triggered by the reform, the reaction of stakeholders and the pace of the process, it is important to look at the awareness of the people charged with the implementation process. The early stages of each and every reform need to be based on building acceptance of change. This includes a clear communication of reform aims and objectives. The following chapter will therefore look at how headmasters, teachers, inspectors and chief inspectors understood the objectives of the reform.

Level of knowledge about the reform

It is worth noting that headmasters generally had a comprehensive knowledge of the reform. This has to do with the fact that the training for the inspectors is done on the job and involves a first evaluation carried out at the respective school, with headmasters participating in this training. The training encompasses in total 18 working days, which is an extensive period of time in this context.

The headmasters interviewed for this study highlighted the complexity of the reform due to its multifaceted objectives. At the same time, they agreed with these objectives and qualified them as necessary to improve the education system in light of societal change and progress. All interviewed headmasters agreed that the overall aim of the reform was to improve the performance of educational institutions by evaluating the quality of their services and work. The respondents also agreed that the data collected should inform decision makers on how to further develop educational institutions:

“The changes introduced in the pedagogical supervision system are primarily made to improve the quality of education, which, as a result, should trigger a better preparation of today's students for a world of constant change” (H8¹²). “The improvements of school performance are necessary to meet the challenges of the modern world” (H7).

Headmasters also mentioned a wide variety of tasks that generally reflected the reform’s objectives but were at times the result of individual interpretation:

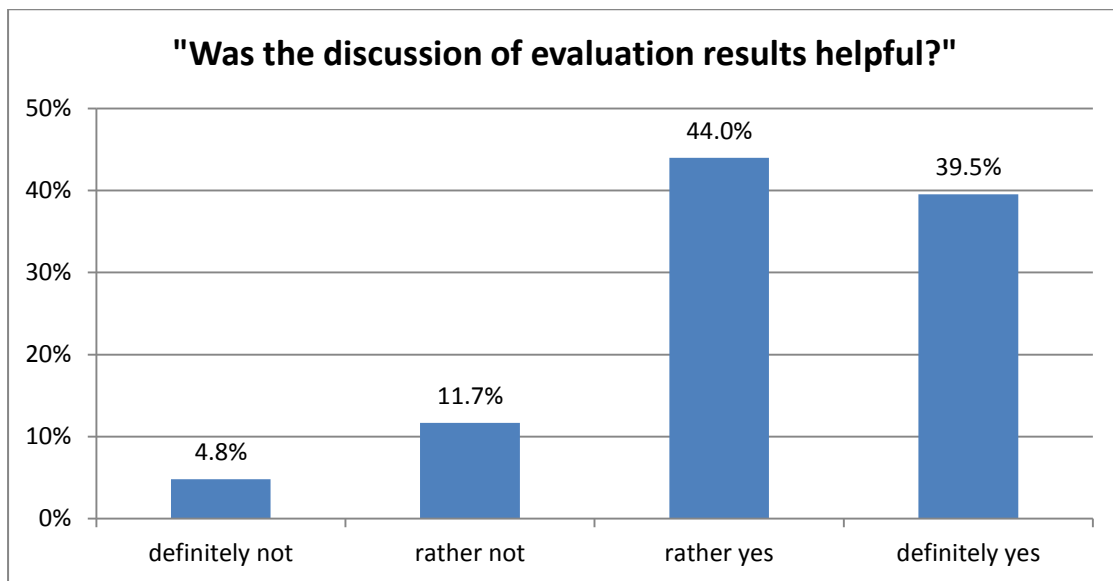
- an individualised curriculum, supporting the general development of students, compliance with educational law;

¹² Letter H indicates that the respondent quoted was a school headmaster.

- facilitation of a school's autonomous, independent performance;
- adjusting school programmes to the new requirements of the labour market;
- creating an environment for cooperation between schools and school authorities as well as pedagogical supervisors through shared responsibilities for education outcomes and quality;
- creating opportunities for informed and creative participation of teachers in transforming the school environment;
- changing the mind-sets of teachers and school managers to create a smoothly functioning educational system in Poland;
- strengthening the role of a teacher as a facilitator of change;
- being co-responsible for progress and development of the school;
- ability to conduct studies using the full range of research methodology;
- ability to undertake actions based on research results;
- free access to information on the entire educational system; and
- the possibility to compare with other schools and institutions in order to use examples of good practice.

Headmasters pointed out that the data collected during the inspection are also useful for schools and other institutions as a tool to improve their performance. However, no one indicated that the changes caused an increase in autonomy.

The headmasters and teachers of those schools that already had experienced external evaluation, (at the end of 2013, 12 000 out of 35 000 Polish schools had done so) also argued that it helped to foster school development. Of the 1 723 respondents, 83.5% indicated that the discussions of the evaluation results, run by the inspectors with members of the teaching staff during the last stage of the external evaluation, were helpful in identifying the school's direction of development (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Perceived helpfulness of the evaluation results discussion

Source: Post-evaluation questionnaires, combined responses from headmasters and teachers, N=1723

Evaluation inspectors and chief inspectors likewise emphasised that evaluation strengthens the idea of keeping the performance quality of educational institutions focused on teaching and learning. Inspectors pointed out that these changes in the pedagogical supervision are important from the perspective of the entire educational system. One of the inspectors exemplified this system-wide perspective by stating that in his opinion the reform objectives included (quote):

- changing the way of acquiring information and conducting an institutions' performance analysis;
- promoting school and institutions' quality development;
- strengthening the system of pedagogical supervision with a particular emphasis on analysis and assessment of the quality of educational activities of schools and institutions;
- facilitating the development of institutions, system and operating methods;
- providing feedback to the supervised schools on their performance using common standards and tools (I7¹³).

In summary, the headmasters, inspectors and chief inspectors perceived the policy reform as not just a change of the school inspectorate, but rather as a change of the entire system. On-going observation and reflection on the system serves to simultaneously improve its performance as well as that of individual institutions. Some respondents perceived this change as being part of a broader effort to adapt institutions to a knowledge-based society through self-observation and reflection. Thus, understanding the objective of change surpassed the narrow context of procedural change. In general, the audience knew, understood and accepted the justification and general direction of the reform that were communicated through printed materials or presentation in face-to-face meetings.

¹³Letter I indicates the respondent was an inspector.

It is worth noting that, although it was one of the reform objectives, the respondents rarely mentioned the issue of autonomy and responsibilities of the headmaster and the local school authority in their understanding of reform priorities.

Coherence of the reform's objectives

In order to assess success factors for political reform, one also needs to look at the question of how actors directly engaged in the change process perceive the coherence of the reform's objectives. In the following these perceptions are presented from the perspective of different stakeholders.

Headmasters interviewed for this study in general do not see a conflict between the various objectives. However, one interviewee (H4) noted that the reform triggered tensions between teachers' self-perception with regard to their work performance and its assessment by parents and students, as teachers had previously not been openly evaluated.

Likewise, inspectors did not see any inconsistency of the reform objectives – at most, they raised concerns about “the new and unknown” (I2), a common reaction to change processes. Another inspector described the teaching environment as being resistant to change, “including signs of discontent, hostility and neglect” (I1). According to this inspector, there is a divide in views apparent, with headmasters on the one side and parents and students on the other.

Similar to the headmasters and inspectors, representatives of the Ministry of National Education participating in the survey did not see any inconsistencies in the objectives of the reform, which due to the engagement of the ministry in designing and executing the reform did not come as a surprise. The coherence of the objectives of the reform with the objectives of previous reforms during the past two decades is worth noting. The objectives included:

- popularising secondary education;
- ensuring equal opportunities;
- strengthening school autonomy;
- creating a nationwide system of monitoring the quality of the education system;
- strengthening schools' relations with the local environment.

As stated by a representative of the Ministry of National Education:

“A strong relation can be seen with previous reforms with requirements towards schools (the element of the evaluation system). The task of the country is to guarantee the relevant level of education and equal opportunities in access to education. Therefore, the state must create standards for the work of schools / education and check their execution. The individual local government – that is, the municipality¹⁴ or the county¹⁵ – organizes its respective schools and appoints the headmaster who engages teachers and determines salaries. This is a system that has decision-making capability, but someone must take responsibility for decisions, therefore the supervision over such activity must be conducted by the state,

¹⁴ In Polish *gminas*.

¹⁵ In Polish *powiat*.

since educating citizens in accordance with their capabilities constitutes an indispensable obligation of the country” (M2¹⁶).

In contrast to the other groups, chief inspectors perceived the reform objectives, in particular their manner of implementation, as incoherent. This has to do with the fact that the reform thoroughly changed the manner in which the inspectorates operate, resulting in limited autonomy for the inspectorate and increased interference of the Ministry of National Education, which now manages concrete tasks inside the inspectorate. One of the interviewed chief inspectors noted, “as a result of the discussion between different interest groups and trade unions, not all goals were fully implemented, e.g. changes in the management structure” (K7¹⁷). Another respondent stated:

“One may notice the divergence between the assumed strengthening of the pedagogical supervision system and the actual influence of the ‘new’ pedagogical supervision on the quality of the work of individual schools and institutions. [...] The centralised pedagogical supervision, being the effect of new legal solutions, does not allow regional and local priorities for pedagogical supervision to be taken into account. At the same time, the collective general ‘consolidated’ information at the central level on the quality of work of schools and educational institutions of the given type is not very usable for effective and efficient pedagogical supervision in the given region containing 4 500 schools and institutions with various influence factors – supervision priorities created at the central level do not always correspond to the various regional and local needs and conditions” (K6).

The ambivalent position of chief inspectors towards the reform is noteworthy. It indeed might be worrying that they have doubts while the head masters largely accept that change is a part of the system in which they operate. However one possible explanation for the discrepancies reported in the perceptions of chief inspectors from those of the headmasters and inspectors might be that they were not given the possibility for feedback in the early stages of the reform, and so thus felt less ownership of its initial design and aims.

Evidently, the chief inspectors perceive one of the priorities of the reform – to secure a coherent vision and consistent quality of education services on the regional level – as a problem. Further concerns relate to what the interviewed chief inspectors called a lack of control over how the evaluation results will be used for further reform.

In the past the chief inspectors were responsible for “supporting schools” (even though no specific definition thereof was given by the law). The law still gives them this responsibility, but at the same time the reform limited their direct influence on schools, ceasing old practices like instance giving advice on “how to handle particular issues” by the inspectors. Although never made explicit in the interviews, some statements by chief inspectors convey frustration over a perceived loss of power.

Indeed, chief inspectors regard the increase in autonomy and self-governance of schools as a de facto loss of control and influence of the inspectorate, which in their eyes could lead to a decrease in quality of the education system. Chief inspectors also raised concerns about the lack of preparation of local authorities when managing education: “*The reduced influence of an educational superintendent (chief inspector) on the local authorities is significant from the point of view of ensuring proper organisation and course of training*” (K6). There were also worries expressed that uncontrolled self-governance of schools might lead to an over emphasis on “*economic results*” rather than the quality of education services.

¹⁶ Letter M indicates person from the Ministry of Education.

¹⁷ Letter K indicates chief inspectors.

In a similar line, chief inspectors emphasised the schools' lack of capacity to conduct internal self-evaluation, which in their eyes is a necessary and essential part of the reform. Evaluation without a developed culture of self-reflection poses a threat. In general, chief inspectors see an excessive emphasis on comparisons and competition between schools without accompanying reflection on self-improvement and development.

This section has shown that most actors of the Polish education system perceived the reform goals to be coherent and justified, with some minor deviations expressed by headmasters. Nonetheless, chief inspectors had somewhat greater concerns regarding their role in the reformed supervision process. It seems that the actor's position in the system as well as their involvement in the early stages of the reform is crucial to their support (or lack thereof) of the reform goals.

Evaluation and conflict

The analysis thus far has shown that in the opinion of a great majority of respondents there was no conflict between the various objectives of the reform. It is important, however, to look at the question of whether or not the implementation of the various goals created conflicts between different actors.

Most headmasters did not indicate a conflict, although one interviewee mentioned a problem in the collaboration between the local government and a specific "teachers' group" within the municipality:

"The main problem with implementing changes on the local level is co-operation with the managing authority¹⁸. For those entities the most important aspect is the result of the external examination¹⁹. It takes a lot of effort to convince local authorities that it constitutes one of the aspects of the school's work and that it is important to show the efforts of the students and the conclusions of teachers from the analysis of the results. A substantial problem is also the large group of teachers who do not see the need for changing their approach to the school, teaching and gaining new competences" (H6).

With respect to conflicts between the headmaster at the school and the local government, one respondent suggested that his/her contract as a headmaster was not extended due to the results from an external evaluation:

"Changes were also noted and positively accepted by the school managing authority. However, my term of office was not extended (in spite of a request from the parents in this regard). Therefore, a risk exists that the new initiatives will not be continued, and this will slow down the process of change" (H6).

The statement gives the impression that evaluation – which provides standardised performance information on schools and institutions – may be used to justify staff decisions. However, it is difficult to assess whether such unintended consequence is systematic and a direct consequence of the reformed supervision process or if it acted as a mere catalyst for earlier conflicts between the local authority and headmaster. Given that the reform does not provide guidelines for detailed change at the local level – it is the school, guided by the results of the external evaluation, which decides which tasks will be undertaken – it is possible that the evaluation could become a tool in the hands of local politicians who make personnel decisions. In general, however, it appeared that the conflict identified by respondents was more likely due to an unintended usage of the reform's outcomes rather than reform goals themselves.

¹⁸ In the Polish context the managing authority for public education is most commonly the local government.

¹⁹ High stakes tests.

This kind of conflict is not visible at the level of “regular” employees of the inspectorates. Nevertheless, one inspector mentioned a headmaster’s unusual stance towards external evaluation, bluntly rejecting it as not “useful for the school” (I7). Another inspector indicated a “resistance to change by some headmasters caused by a lack of knowledge” (I5). Thus although no overt conflicts were mentioned, on a few occasions the interviews revealed typical behaviours linked to a resistance to change.

Chief inspectors attribute a safeguard function to the inspectorate in the interviews: The inspectorate protects the schools and the local society against hasty decisions of the local-government based solely on economic calculations. Notwithstanding the accuracy of such a statement, it is worth noting that this resentment indicates changes in the relations between central, regional and local authorities: limiting the competences of the superintendents with competences on the regional level has direct effects on local reality. The change is also visible from the macro perspective.

A representative of the Ministry of Education stated that there have been no conflicts due to the reform, but mentioned some limitations for the regions to carry out pedagogical supervision: “Generally we do not see major problems. However, the fact that the reform standardised the procedures of pedagogical supervision in the entire country, it naturally limits regional bodies in their freedom to carry out supervision tasks”(M2).

Overall, it is apparent that while the aims of the reform were commonly understood and accepted, they did not protect against local power games and conflicts. In fact the reform may have in some cases served as catalyst that allowed latent conflict to come to the surface. The differences reported in the perception of the evaluation however are quite typical in the situation of opposite standpoints in a competitive environment with a lack of trust. Furthermore, respondents indicated other kinds of conflicts connected with the implementation of the reform, which are discussed in depth in the next section.

Management processes

Asked about the reasons for changes in pedagogical supervision, headmasters indicated the research experience of existing pedagogical supervision and referred to a “crisis” in education:

“In my opinion, the initiative for changes in pedagogical supervision was based mainly on the need to adjust school reality to the changing external reality connected with, amongst others, globalization, an increase of awareness of and requirements from parents towards the school [...], experience with the existing effect of changes, (which did not bring the expected results), and reflection over the philosophy of the school’s work” (H7)

Other reasons indicated by headmasters included “the need to standardise the criteria for requirements placed on schools and institutions” (H1) and “adjustment of the Polish education system to EU norms” (H5).

Similarly, inspectors highlighted the importance of the negative experience from the previous pedagogical supervision system and the above-mentioned “crisis” in education. In their opinion, other reasons included the influence of supervision models from other EU countries (I1, I2).

Issues mentioned by headmasters, inspectors and chief inspectors can be subsumed under two types of internal changes in their institutions: Changes in the legal regulations and changes in the work organisation:

- Changes in legal regulations include adjustments to the school statute, regulations of the teachers board and organisational regulations of the inspectorates.

- Changes in work organisation include the establishment of commissions, restructured training of employees, transforming branches of the inspectorates into departments of pedagogical supervision and underlying goals of education practice (mission and vision).

Did those changes trigger resistance or lead to conflicts? Overall, headmasters did not experience open or frequent conflict, or chose not to share those instances. One respondent (H4) nonetheless noted that there was resistance in undertaking new tasks by employees at the first two stages, that is, in the phases of introduction and constructing tools.

Unlike headmasters, inspectors reported rather widespread open conflict. They reported that, in order to meet the demands of the reformed evaluation process, shifts of staff between departments – from “control” to “evaluation” – were made, which together with a general reduction in the number of staff in the inspectorates caused prevalent feelings of insecurity (I2). Conflicts further arose from a reallocation of responsibilities and tasks. Inspectors were instructed to assign tasks themselves and had now further responsibilities other than evaluation, such as “training subsequent groups, gaining authorisations and moving to a corresponding department” (I2). Timely and well performed evaluation was reported to be in jeopardy, given the additional responsibilities and higher workload, and frustration over these issues was voiced loudly (I3, I5).

Moreover the changes by the reform were reported to be not sufficiently backed up by the adjusted organisational structures and means of information, such as stable teams of inspectors and appropriate communication of which schools are set up for evaluation (I5). For some inspectors the lack of proper organisation and logistics of the evaluation process were particularly frustrating:

“... A lack of fixed teams and a lack of earlier information on schools planned for evaluation, together with a lack of possibilities to plan individual evaluations result in nervousness, no team spirit, negative emotions, complaints, discouragement etc. This often affects personal life” (I5).

Chief inspectors’ reports of complications revolved around much the same fields as those mentioned by inspectors. A first set of issues revolved around inspectors’ working conditions and material resources such as the provision of “voice recorders and wireless internet access; equipping individual workplaces with laptops” and concerns pertaining to “the use of private cars to conduct duties by supervisors” (K7). Emphasis was also put on evaluators’ demands to adjust financial compensation for field work, as the reform increased the demands on them. An issue pertaining to compensation and workload revolved around the correct “calculation of working time of the inspectors conducting evaluation” (K6). Chief inspectors reported that numerous meetings with those staff had taken place attempting to resolve these complications (K7).

Obstacles in the implementation of the reform were also reported regarding the reallocation of tasks within the inspectorates. As described above, the reform precipitated a shift of staff and resources to the evaluation department, which was met with reluctance. The reallocation of resources led to the belief among staff that evaluation had taken undeservedly priority “over other tasks connected with pedagogical supervision” (K6). Some inspectors showed an unwillingness to participate in evaluator’s training when instructed to do so and frequent “disagreements between inspectors conducting evaluations” were reported (K6). Moreover, “allowing evaluation to be conducted only by accordingly trained inspectors results in a negative attitude of the other inspectors towards them“(K5).

Another area of complications pertains to communication issues between actors implementing the reform. Messages from the Ministry of National Education and the Organisers of Inspectors’ trainings were reported to be inconsistent (K6) and *“neither the chief inspector nor the directors of departments were provided with reliable information on the implementation of a training system for evaluation inspectors”*

which made *“harmonious cooperation between the project team and direct inspectors’ superiors”* difficult (K9).

Statements by the chief inspectors indicated that the changed role of the inspectorates (moving away from supporting schools towards evaluating them) left headmasters with a lack of support. In this line, chief inspectors reported that the *“number of telephone calls by headmasters asking for advice has dramatically increased”* and that *“there were also attempts to use the evaluation and control visits at schools and institutions to obtain support”* (K9).

Management of resources

The successful implementation of a centrally designed reform depends largely on the capacity and the resources on the local level to fulfill the reform goals and put them into practice. When asked about the management of necessary resources to implement the 2009 reform, headmasters did not signal any significant shortcomings.

Inspectors complained about a few problems, including a lack of access to mobile internet and an increased workload outside standard working hours. Chief inspectors were critical about the insufficient budget for the inspectorates. In addition, they claimed that there was too little time to introduce the necessary changes and fewer people employed to operate the new system: *“At the moment, employment in the institution [inspectorate] is decreasing; more and more people are resigning including evaluators”* (K3); *“there is a lack of additional resources (human and financial) to execute the reform...”* (K5).

Who decides about resources? The majority of the headmasters pointed to themselves as decision makers in this area; a few of them indicated that the school employees decide, which suggests a democratic culture in that particular school. School inspectors said that chief inspectors were the ones who made decisions about *resources*.

To conclude, neither headmasters nor inspectors indicated any major problems with the resources and they considered the knowledge about evaluation they possessed as an asset. Chief inspectors on the other hand pointed out that the major problem was a lack of additional financial resources for the inspectorates.

Governance changes triggered by the reform

Every change brings about intended and unintended consequences. The analysis conducted for this study reveals a picture of consensus on the objectives of the reform along with ambiguities concerning the implementation and possible consequences. What modifications of the governing structure resulted from the reform?

On the micro level, headmasters reported increased teamwork among teachers, which was perceived by the headmasters as a positive change. While inspectors confirm this, they also voiced criticism: *“Evaluation [...] stresses the importance of teamwork, which has been made mandatory by the reform. However, school evaluations often reveal that the implementation of this requirement in so-called “teacher teams” remains superficial and restricted to symbolic actions”* (I1). In individual cases, parents as well as students and the supervising institution were perceived to be more involved in the governing structure after the reform. A representative of the Ministry of education reported that through the supervision reform parents’ associations feel more involved in the education policy process: *“The position of parents is very interesting – they recognize their importance to the evaluation of schools. Recently, at the meeting of the Parents Forum at the Ministry of Education, parents’ associations have identified pedagogical supervision*

as the element of the system which most emphasises their importance” (M2). Parents associations can directly interact with the Ministry of Education at the “Parents’ Forum”, a consultative meeting established by the Ministry in 2011/2012.

The change in the governing structure is most visible within the inspectorates as reported by both chief inspectors and inspectors. One chief inspector (K6) pointed to four particular fields in which the governance structure had changed: organisation and planning; administration; leading, managing and motivating staff; and internal controlling, along the following lines:

- within the field of organisation and planning the organisational structure of the Inspectorate, the work organisation, task allocation (other than pedagogical supervision), task planning methods and financial planning were changed;
- in administration the expense structure, the calculation of inspectors’ working time, the allocation of computer equipment and other materials, the administrative office system, the staff deployment and the logistics of long-distance movement of employees were adjusted in the course of the reform;
- with respect to leading, managing and motivating staff, the reform led to changes in recruitment criteria, the definition of official duties, professional development actions and inspectors’ work evaluation criteria (for their work as civil servants);
- internal controlling was intensified by introducing more encompassing reporting mechanisms.

In summary, the reform primarily affected the management of involved institutions through measures such as the introduction of self-evaluation, teamwork and the strengthening of new actors in the governing structure. As intended by the authors of the reform, the reform promoted teamwork and appears to have initiated democratisation (in the sense of the inclusion of a broader variety of actors) and transparency, as indicated by the evaluation methods and inclusion of different groups. Headmasters highlighted that the reform changed the way teachers involved in evaluation work together, leading to more teamwork. This was confirmed (although in a much more critical tone) by inspectors: *”Evaluation does not lead to changes in the educational governing structure, but the standards do stress the importance of team work... [However] there can be superficiality involved”* (I1). For this inspector, the creation of a structure to include new and different actors does not mean that they are actually included in practice.

The perspective of chief inspectors is particularly interesting in the light of the quote below. First, they believe that the change has not been fully implemented – this is possibly linked to previous (unrealised) plans of establishing new institutions dealing with the quality of education and merging inspectorates with the structures of regional offices.²⁰ Second, they indicate that one of the key directions of change should be building support mechanisms for schools:

²⁰In 2009 there was a plan to abolish inspectorates and set up a new form of them, through which staff and structures responsible for evaluation were supposed to be merged with institutions responsible for standardised tests. As a result there would have been one single, rather large institution overseeing the entire quality control for education. The remaining parts of the inspectorates (staff focusing on other tasks such as disciplinary measures or other urgent daily business) were supposed to be included into the regional administration. These plans never got implemented, because of resistance within the party of the Minister of Education.

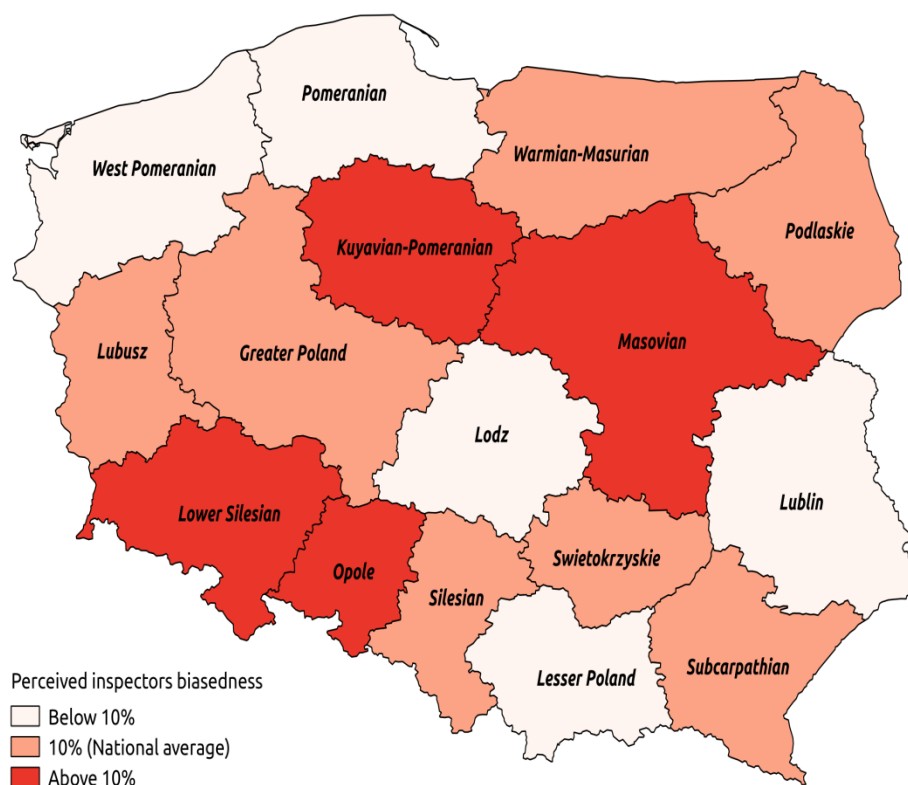
“The essence of pedagogical supervision is its effectiveness; short-term actions that are planned on a scale impossible to execute are undesirable for the operations of schools. Pedagogical supervision does not cover all actors responsible for the quality of education services; it mainly addresses headmasters. Moreover, there are other institutions responsible for the quality of education. Conducting discussions about the scope of the reform and giving an overview over the framework[to other actors and institutions] could help show the benefits – both measurable and general – of the pedagogical supervision reform” (K3).

The interviews further revealed that chief inspectors appear to build a narrative of a “bad” local administration and “vulnerable” schools and don’t seem to exhibit adequate professionalism. These impressions are often also conveyed by the media. This is related to earlier findings of the evaluation being a catalyst of existing conflicts. It raises the question whether there is a marked regional component to this notion. Inspectorates are regionally grounded and dependent on the political and administrative culture of the respective region. Hence, they may exhibit regionally different levels of organisational flexibility to implement the reform and are subject to political quarrels. These quarrels might translate to political resistance to the reform and the central ministry.

A good indicator of this is how schools perceive inspectors’ objectivity. Nationwide, over 90% of the 2989 teachers and headmasters who completed the post-evaluation questionnaires in 2011 indicated that they perceived the inspectors as being objective. However, in some provinces over 25% of respondents indicated that they perceived that the inspectors were biased. This can be broken down by province. On average across Poland (16 provinces in total) 9.8% of respondents considered the inspectors biased. In five provinces, the percentage was lower (with a minimum of 3.1% in the West Pomeranian region) and in four the average was higher, sometimes substantially. The most extreme responses were reported in the Masovian region, where 22.6% of respondents rated the inspectors’ attitude as ‘definitely negative’ (i.e. strongly biased), and a further seven per cent chose the less extreme grade of ‘rather not neutral’, for a total of 29.5%. In the other three provinces the percentages are similar, if less dramatic. In the Opole region, 27% of the headmasters and teachers questioned the inspectors’ objectivity. For the Lower Silesian region, the figure was 23.7% and in Kuyavian-Pomeranian region it was 22.6% (see Figure 3)²¹.

²¹. It should be noted that by 2014 there were no statistically significant differences between schools in different regions’ perception of inspectors’ objectivity.

Figure 3. Perceived objectivity of inspectors, by region. "Are evaluation inspectors objective?"



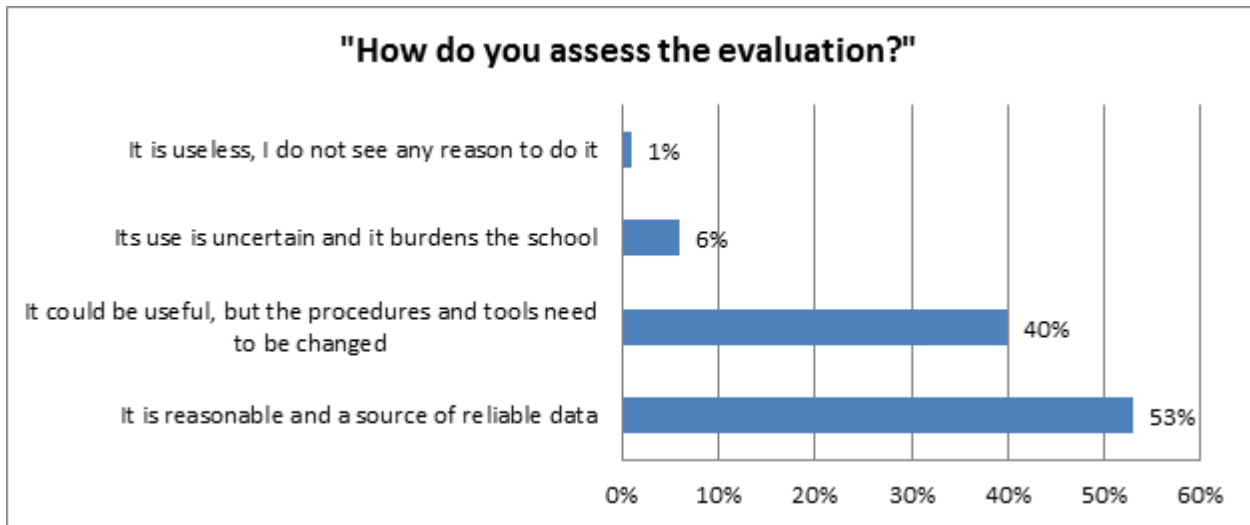
Source: Post-evaluation questionnaires, combined responses from headmasters and teachers, N = 2,989

Attitudes towards change

Understanding and accepting the aims of the reform, seeing the connection between reform and local conflicts, being aware of the functional and structural changes and also of the tools used during implementation are likely to influence attitudes towards the reform.

Most respondents did not notice any conflicts at the local level or in relations with other entities. Headmasters' reports of the attitudes towards the reform in their school and its environment revealed a divide in attitudes between those who had experienced the reformed evaluation process and those who had not. In the former group, attitudes were generally positive. Of the interviewed 783 teachers and headmasters who had taken part in an evaluation, over 93% approved of the reform, although concerns were raised as to the particular procedures and tools used (see figure 4 below).

Figure 4. Perception of the usefulness of evaluation



Source: Post-evaluation surveys, combined responses of teachers and headmasters, N = 783

Among those who had not yet undergone evaluation, the attitudes were more varied. One headmaster stated a firm positive effect of earlier restructuring efforts to the acceptance of the recent reform: “The current change was preceded by an implementation of an inter-school quality assurance system, which engaged the entire school society. One could claim that earlier implementation of the large system facilitated the new implementation. A significant part of the teaching staff eagerly participated in new trainings provided by the new system” (H3). However, this is not without counter examples, and resistance and scepticism – especially in the early stages of implementation – was frequently reported. Interviewees attributed this reluctance to reform mainly to “concerns about the unknown and the possible consequences of the new form of pedagogical supervision” (H8).

Experiences of inspectors echoed the distinction between stakeholders who already had experienced the evaluation of their school and those who had not yet participated. As one inspector described, “in most cases headmasters and teachers expressed concern, fear and anxiety – but such reactions always disappeared after the evaluation took place. Most often, at the end of evaluation, we would hear: ‘now we know what it is and it’s not as bad as we thought.’”(I5).

Hence, it can be concluded that the less positive attitudes were caused by a lack of comprehensive information, which is also typical of resistance to change. When asked about their experiences, inspectors who had been trained within the framework of the new evaluation system reacted in various ways. The first group that was trained was composed of those who volunteered, and as might be expected they were very enthusiastic. Reactions among those in subsequent groups appointed by the chief inspector were less positive. “With time, the engagement of many enthusiasts started to drop (for example due to the work load in and outside of regular working hours, a lack of time for reflection...). The willingness to see the need for change and its realisation was still there, however there was less eagerness. There were also a few skeptics, who missed the former inspection system, negated the work of the project team and did not see the sense in evaluation. Inspection of documentation was considered more important and effective than research based to a large degree on interviews” (I5).

Chief inspectors reported a variety of attitudes towards change in all groups of stakeholders. For example, inspectors *“accepted the changes; however they did not hide the fatigue resulting from the amount of realised tasks. There were sceptical opinions concerning the declaratory nature of obtained information about the school, as well as opinions down playing the significance of school documentation”* (K5). One chief inspector (K8) stressed that evaluation (especially external evaluation reports) may result in an unofficial ranking of schools, which was perceived as a negative effect of the reform.

On another note, but related the ranking of schools, one of the most frequent causes for conflict is the awarding of a “grade” lower than expected in sub-ratings within the report. This is particularly common along the upper end of the grading scale (i.e. good, very good and excellent) as the school community tries to set themselves apart from other schools. Discussion – and possibly conflict – frequently ensues in order to obtain a higher rating (e.g. “very good” instead of “good”) from the inspectorate for sub-sections of the report. On the other hand, when the school’s performance is assessed as low it is likely to be actually even lower as inspectors try to avoid devastating ratings. Hence teachers less commonly contest a sub-rating at the lower end of the rating scale.

The interviewed representative of the Ministry of National Education expressed the same perception as the abovementioned about the attitudes towards the changes by the reform:

“Results of surveys conducted in schools after evaluation indicate that headmasters where external evaluation took place assess the change positively; there are more negative comments in environments which did not experience external evaluation. Both teachers and headmasters who participated in external evaluation trainings within the project express positive opinions. While inspectors accepted the idea of the change; most of their reservations related to organisational problems in the context of executing tasks outside of pedagogical supervision. [...] much has been done, however it is a long process of building a new supervision system, and we must wait a few years for the final effects and results of the changes” (M2).

Another indicator of resistance towards change or negative opinions about the reformed school evaluation system might stem from resignation of inspectors due to overtime work and insufficient salary. However, improvements are visible at a macro level. As the representative of the Ministry of Education described:

“One can clearly see the change in the role of inspectors who provide schools with more and more precise information on the functioning of different areas of their work. A culture of internal and external evaluation is developing, in which the whole school environment is engaged”(M2).

In summary, most respondents did not note any conflicts on the local level in connection with the new system goals. Nonetheless, in terms of the attitudes towards the changes, i.e. the practical dimension of the reform, the respondents indicated problems in various areas: a general concern about the reform as such, negative attitudes because of additional work load and concerns about unofficial school rankings due to publication of evaluation results. It is clear that with reference to headmasters, such concerns form a sort of projection, since they disappear after evaluation. One may therefore state that the criticism of changes concerns not the purpose of the reform, but its implementation and communication.

The press as influencer of policy dialogue

The media analysis for this report indicates that the press focused on providing information on the reform’s characteristics rather than highlighting disadvantages or advantages. Of the 30 articles published, 15 are written in a neutral tone, 5 in a positive tone, and 10 articles are critical. Most of the criticism

focussed on of the possibility of disbanding education and examination boards, of cutting jobs at the inspectorates, of the risk of declining education quality and of a lack clear information on the changes.

In the beginning, the threat of closing down offices of local education authorities, the creation of regional centres for education assessment and the liquidation of examining boards dominated as main themes. Publication of critical articles in the regional and national press had nearly ceased by April 2011. At the end of 2011 and the beginning of 2012, published articles predominantly covered the advantages of internal and external evaluation. The reform was described as a sort of revolution and as the attempt to close regional inspectorates.

In terms of articles published in the professional press aimed at teachers and headmasters, as many as 88 texts referred to supervision, but only 15 to the reform. Remaining articles concerned pedagogical supervision as a secondary topic, and to some extent promotions, headmasters' work and related matters. Similar to the non-professional press, most of the articles appeared during the first half of 2011, when the Ministry of National Education introduced changes in the system of monitoring the quality of education. Authors of professional publications were more critical than their colleagues at the general press. Two thirds of the texts were polemical, and others discussed the reform without any critical comments (but also without any positive ones).

The criticism of the reform is at least partially a function of the opinions and standpoints of commentators, experts and the authors of individual articles. Among the analysed titles, three (*Dyrektor Szkoły*, *Głos Nauczycielski*, *Gazeta Szkolna*) included both negative and neutral analyses. *Przegląd Oświatowy* published one critical article and *Nowa Szkoła* presented information neutral to the policy change. Professional publications, which usually represent specific education circles or communities (e.g. trade unions, management) produced different viewpoints, in spite of a general predominance of polemical comments.

The ten critical articles mostly concentrated on the unnecessary replacement of the functioning system with a new one, the costs connected with such a transformation and the high demands put on the inspectors. Out of these ten, seven articles concentrated on structural change in Polish education. Three were devoted to the external evaluation itself and qualified it as an entirely wrong approach that was not well founded in pedagogical theory and led to school rankings and unnecessary competition between educational institutions.

The media analysis indicates that the discourse around the reform was a subject of interest to specialists rather than the wider public. Also, unsurprisingly, the intensity of criticism or approval depended on the relation between the journal and the ministry and so this analysis should be interpreted with caution.

Results and broader impact of the reform

According to the Ministry of National Education and the Centre for Education Development, as of early 2012, 895 inspectors (1 400 as the target for the end of 2014) have been trained for the new evaluation process. Likewise, in 2012 these figures amounted to 5 589 (headmasters) and 619 (teachers), with a target of training 20 000 headmasters and 3 000 teachers by 2014.

One obvious first result is the sheer quantity of new information: As of 2012, 3 000 evaluation reports had already been published (M2). The reports are published on the internet (www.npseo.pl) to deliver relevant information to interested parties, particularly parents, students and teachers. The information is intended to support schools in improving the quality of work and to inform them about the extent a given school meets the requirements. They also provide educational value to the other schools in the community.

Another result is related to the process of preparing the report. Because the entire school community and its external partners participate in that process, it contributes to cohesion of the stakeholders as a group. On the national level the reform provides quantitative data which allows for the identification of emerging trends in the system, supporting informed decisions about the future direction of the education system.

After an initial period of concern and some resistance, the external evaluation process was highly appreciated by the headmasters of the schools in which the evaluation was conducted. It is worth emphasising that in many schools governed in a democratic manner, it appears the evaluation is an actual impetus for further changes in the direction of the state requirements. The reports will be used for authentic reading and self-analysis of the entities that create the school life. This conviction is supported by an observation of the work atmosphere of a teachers' board meeting concerned with the presentation of evaluation results. The teachers' acceptance level is lower than the headmasters', albeit younger teachers perceive the evaluation and the new model of supervision quite positively; they are well-educated and regularly undertake professional development. Other school staff appear happy with the fact that their role and commitment in school work has been recognised. Chief inspectors expressed themselves in a similar way, describing a decrease in the anxiety and concerns over time that accompanied the introduction of reform. They acknowledged the importance of a systematic collection of information on the functioning of schools.

Looking at statements assessing the impact of the implementation of the new system of pedagogical supervision on educational policy, according to the headmasters who took part in the questionnaire, it appears that the implementation of the system affected the activities of institutions but not the educational policy in the country. One of the headmasters, referring negatively to the impact of the reform on the national level, claims:

“In my opinion, the results of the modernised pedagogical supervision have virtually no impact on national education policy. Comments and opinions of teachers and headmasters as practitioners are not taken into account. We should have our own “educational identity”, but now educational policy is guided by the data from other countries, ignoring our autonomy. Nowadays, the headmasters and teachers bear a huge responsibility. The assumption that their actions –in fact, the actions of the school itself – are fully independent and autonomous is often false, mainly because they lack support of the local authorities in the evaluation process” (H2).

Whereas there were also positive reactions to the influence of the reform at the school level:

“The implementation of a modernised system of pedagogical supervision has a huge and invaluable influence on education policy implemented in my school. A huge commitment of teachers and students in the decision-making process concerning education is noticeable; teachers' accountability for the learning outcomes, and school development and progress outcomes have increased; teachers are involved in personal development; they can share good practices; they possess the skills useful for conducting a variety of research; and they are able to analyse the results, as well as use the conclusions from the supervision for taking actions to improve the school work quality” (H7).

Inspectors speaking about the reform's impact on the central level often highlighted the standardisation of research tools, which, in their opinion, contributed to a reliable diagnosis of the system. This can be understood as a cognitive change and a clear step in acquiring a culture of evaluation. Chief inspectors similarly acknowledge the benefits of having comparable evaluation results across the whole system. One of the chief inspectors states that *“our proposals and comments addressed to the Ministry of Education and the Centre for Education Development affect the planning of supervision in the whole*

country, the amount of inspections, evaluations, fields, subject matter, organisation of the external training of evaluators and inspectors. Perhaps they show the state of education at local and national level as never before” (K5).

According to chief inspectors the modernised system of pedagogical supervision will also influence education policy by delivering clear requirements. On the lower level it has a positive effect on the cooperation of the regulatory body with the governing body, the headmaster and the teachers by giving schools an objective and comprehensive assessment that can be easily compared between different schools and institutions.

In summary, in terms of the impact of the reform, it is clear that the actors operating on the micro level cannot see the influence of the evaluation outcomes on actions at the systems level. It is hard to tell if this is a drawback of the evaluation system of education, or simply the result of a one-way flow of information in the education system. From the macro perspective, the complexity of the gathered data is clearer, however, chief inspectors clearly emphasise that their actions focus too often on “extinguishing the fire” – taking care of problems that unexpectedly appear, rather than designing a long-term education policy. They also have doubts towards the process of policy formulation – they feel that they deliver data, but are excluded from the decision-making process – the policy is developed at the macro level.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

The resolution of the Minister of National Education of 7 October 2009 changed the way in which pedagogical supervision, in particular school inspection, is conducted in Poland. The reform was not only an attempt to keep up with modern societal demands on education; it also became necessary because the prior inspection system had major shortcomings: inefficient processes; a multitude of – often unclear – roles and tasks for inspectors; and the lack of a coherent policy approach to inspection.

The main aim of the reform was to introduce a new system of combined internal and external evaluation into school supervision practice. The intervention built upon a standardised approach to external evaluation and reflected the need for quality assurance in a decentralised educational system that is characterised by far-reaching autonomy of schools and other educational institutions. The reform focused on three functions of supervision: (1) monitoring compliance with the law, (2) supporting the work of schools and other education institutions, as well as teachers in performing their activities and (3) undertaking evaluation of education institutions.

The changes introduced by the reform have deeply influenced a range of areas of the school system, for example the organisation of work in inspectorates and the attitudes of important actors in the education system as to the relevance of data to support internal and external school evaluation. The reform also influenced students' social and school life as the new approach to evaluation includes more stakeholders than before and requires more collaboration across school communities.

Transparency and comparability were guiding themes for the implementation of the reform. New processes of evaluation and their results were not only openly communicated to the stakeholders who were directly involved, such as headmasters, inspectors and teachers, but also to other actors in the school community (parents and students) and the general public and media. Thus, the reform introduced a new element of public accountability and social oversight to the system. One important example is the creation of a website that centrally collects evaluation results and makes them publicly available.

The following section presents the main conclusions from the study at hand and offers for each of the findings a set of recommendations.

Implementation of the new evaluation system: communication is key

Stakeholders interviewed for this reform generally understood the reform as one that aims at a larger change of the education system rather than an isolated intervention reforming the school inspectorates only. However, the underlying concept of the reform that aimed to create a new institutional culture of collaboration within school communities as well as an ongoing reassessment of processes was not well recognised by all interviewees. Instead, most statements showed that the new evaluation process was perceived to be a rather technical endeavour. It is quite interesting that those who have already taken part in the evaluation processes expressed much more positive opinions than those who are still expecting inspectors. In addition, one of the core objectives of the reform, which was to increase school autonomy, was only rarely acknowledged by respondents. This reduced understanding of the reform goals is also illustrated by conflicts that arose during the implementation process. For example, in one case it was reported that the contract of a headmaster was not renewed after the evaluation showed unsatisfactory student achievement. However, the reform was not meant to facilitate this kind of process, and to be fair it is not clear if this kind of behaviour was prompted by the reform or if it was a catalyst for local actors to pursue their own agendas. This kind of misinterpretation of reform goals and the related misuse of the new

evaluation procedures, including comparative data on school performance, clearly undermines the central aim of building a culture of collaboration and dialogue as part of a culture of evaluation.

This last point is crucial. Building a constructive culture that involves open dialogue and collaboration as part of school evaluations is something new to the Polish context, where traditionally inspection is seen as oppressive or even harmful. Indeed, the Polish term for inspection is “nadzór”, whose etymology refers to “controlling or guarding something”. This etymological legacy might partly explain the doubts about the reform as well as the conflicts arising during its implementation.

Furthermore, a lack of leeway in how given tasks are taken care of and at what pace, leads to risk avoidance and behaviours of covering up mistakes. As such it hampers innovation and improvement as employees put more effort in avoiding punishment and may lose focus on the actual mission and objectives of the reform. If local power games, such as the one mentioned above, persist and prove systematic, this can turn out to strongly impede the overall success of the reform if not met by the central level with adequate counter measures and reassurance in the local level’s autonomy (particularly the school community).

The report also shows that the inspectorates are the central *locus* for the implementation of the reform: The inspectorates’ staff are the primary implementers of the mandated changes within school communities and are entrusted with the training of headmasters. To date, most of the changes initiated by the reform have taken effect in the inspectorates, in their organisational structure and related processes. With the reform, on the one hand, schools and local authorities gained autonomy on how they engage in dialogue and collaboration with stakeholders in order to fulfil the reform’s requirements. On the other hand, chief inspectors for this report argued that the Ministry’s involvement in the evaluation process extended into the inspectorate’s realm of responsibility. Both changes were perceived by the chief inspectors as a loss of power. Moreover, earlier in 2009, plans were underway to dissolve the inspectorates and merge evaluation responsibilities with the institution entrusted with standardised testing. Non-evaluation tasks were to be transferred to regional authorities. While these plans were ultimately not realised due to political reasons, they appear to loom over chief inspectors attitudes towards the current reform’s goals to devolve responsibilities. Another issue directly related to the interplay between different governance levels during the reform’s implementation is the at times contradictory information provided to the inspectorates related to this process. As reported by a chief inspector, this pertains for instance to the Ministry of National Education and the organisation responsible with the training of inspectors. Implementation strategies suggested by these two bodies contradicted each other and provided no reliable information on how the training of inspectors should be carried out on the local level. One may therefore state that the criticism of changes concerns not so much the overall goals and aims of the reform, but rather its implementation and communication. This conclusion is also evident in the statement of the Ministry’s representatives who stated that more attention and precise management on behalf of the central level is necessary when introducing new reforms.

These communication issues pose two fundamental problems: firstly, they constitute obstacles in obtaining the support of all stakeholders for the reform, as this undermines the confidence in the ability of the central governance level; secondly, it holds up resources of the inspectorates which could be used elsewhere.

The self-governance of the local level can be an important step towards a culture of collaboration to jointly improve the quality of the overall schooling system rather than a system of schools competing with one another. However, considering the crucial role the inspectorates play in implementing the reform, as it appears now, the chief inspectors’ mind-set leads the inspectorates to hinder the emergence of a collaborative institutional culture instead of being a facilitator thereof. Nonetheless if the ministry firmly

supports the emergence of self-governing capacity, the chief inspectors' concerns may turn out to be teething pains as the reform progresses.

Recommendations

A clear and comprehensive strategy to communicate the reform's underlying concepts is vital to the success of the implementation process, as only then will all important actors in the education system commit to the reform goals. Therefore, it is recommended to:

- Strengthen the communication of the reform's vision and mission to make sure all stakeholders have a common understanding of the goals and purposes of the reform. This can also contribute to avoiding power games between governance levels.
- Take concerns of stakeholders seriously and exchange with them on how to address the problems that emerge during the implementation process.
- Offer support and guidance to inspectorates as the main agents of the implementation process on the local level; This is a process with no quick solution but one that must be entertained over years.

Building capacity in the inspectorates and on the local level

Capacity building is a key element in ensuring the successful implementation of a reform. The study at hand found that chief inspectors doubted that the local level had the capacity for self-governance and likewise reported that they have no clear guidance as to how the process of implementation of the reform was intended by the Ministry. While the inspectorates were the primary agents of the reform implementation, the reported shortcomings in implementation indicate that they do not yet have the required capacity to do this. This is due to the fact that efforts for further professional development of school inspectors have shown little effect so far. In addition to training, especially in the field of data analysis and the reporting of evaluation results, school inspectors also need more guidance in how their work is best organised.

Also, chief inspectors stated that they did not have confidence in the capacity of schools to perform internal self-evaluation, as there is a lack of a culture of self-reflection. Likewise, chief inspectors perceived local authorities to lack the general capacity for managing education and they worried that they would focus on short term economic goals rather than overall educational performance in the broadest sense. However, given that the chief inspectors had no opportunity to voice their concerns in earlier stages of the reform, either assessment of the local level capacities may be biased.

Recommendations

- Put emphasis on the development of the tools and procedures of evaluation to take pressure off inspectorates.
- Allocate resources to inspectorates to enable them to focus on the implementation of the reform.
- Build capacity for the local authorities and schools for self-governance and self-evaluation.

Facilitate inclusive school governance

The study also showed that the reform had significant impact on how central actors within school communities interact: the changes in school supervision fostered inclusive school governance and elements of democratisation, both elements that some schools had incorporated prior to the reform. These schools also showed greater progress towards the reform goals than those that had not established similar practices in the past. This suggests that the increased autonomy granted by the reform disproportionately benefited schools that already had a culture of cooperation among its stakeholders. It is worth emphasizing that in many schools governed in a democratic manner, it appears the evaluation is an actual impetus for further changes in the direction of the state requirements. Therefore, inclusive governance and increased school autonomy may reinforce each other and lead to a fruitful exchange of ideas between schools as well as between members within a school community.

However, the study at hand showed limitations of the reforms' success to this end: while the new system formally requires teachers to engage in collaboration, observed collaboration to date proves to be rudimentary. Teachers seem to just technically carry out this goal of the reform as a formal requirement. Thus, a new *culture* of collaboration within schools has not emerged so far and hence fostering its development should be a priority of future education governance in Poland. Given the context of a general hesitance towards changes in the responsibilities of stakeholders, as well as related power structures, the emergence of an institutional culture of collaboration and mutual improvement will be a process developing over years. As it is strongly related to trust and confidence in the actions of other stakeholders it cannot be *built* but only facilitated. Key to this is to firmly support the individual groups of stakeholders in their roles and enable cooperation until it becomes self-sustainable.

Recommendations

- Changing an institutional culture takes time; provide lasting support to stakeholders beyond the point of the reform's completion.
- Enable an exchange of ideas with local school communities which already have experience with inclusive governance structures to guide other schools and local communities.

Final remarks and outlook

Every attempt at reform should consider the subject of change from multiple perspectives and should show the role of the different groups in that initiative. This report describes a period of time that, for the purposes of this study, has been frozen in a static way, almost like a portrait. This, however, does not capture the full complexity of the situation. Reality is not static, but dynamic and transforms itself rapidly. The closing piece of this report was written four years after the beginning of the reform, two years later than collection of the data, and it should be admitted that change happens constantly.

Today, for example, more is known about conflicts triggered by the external evaluation than was the case originally. The reform is still in the stage of the development and continued reflection, and modifications are an important element of the process. Since 2012 the main changes have been implemented in terms of standards, tools and methodology, together with the introduction of the framework supporting inspectors in data analyses.

As with all complex systems, it is impossible to change one element without touching another and feedback loops between the system's components are common. Across complex education systems the same policy impulse can trigger different initial attitudes and such feedback loops can create vicious or virtuous cycles. With respect to internal evaluation, while it increases accountability and serves as means

to gain knowledge about where to improve the system, the process can be perceived by teachers as permanent scrutiny and as such as a vote of distrust in the work of the individual teacher. And instances like the power games between local authorities and headmasters discussed in Chapter 4, or the reluctance to collaborate among teachers support the notion that the new evaluation systems can be perceived as a loss of control, or a means of punishment rather than improvement. Here increasing the professionalisation of the teaching profession may be an elementary component to alleviate the consequences. Strengthening the teacher's self-efficacy and out-of-class influence can help alleviate such attitudes.

While there are a number of shortcomings in the reform process to date, the future outlook does look promising, as the reform is still in progress and present reluctance to change may dispel if managed correctly. What the reform thus far already managed to do is to give a voice to stakeholders whom previously did not have an opportunity to voice their ideas and concerns. Whether these formal opportunities translate into widespread practice during the course of the reform process and beyond, and ultimately evolve into a new institutional culture, must be the subject of future analysis. Key to the success of the reform is that the ministry takes the concerns of the stakeholders seriously and tries and reconciles all stakeholders in supporting the changes. This is a process with no quick solution but one that must be followed-up on over the coming years. Mandating participation of a wide range of stakeholders with often divergent interests will inevitably generate disagreement, but fundamental to successful education governance is how to manage those disagreements.

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